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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0761
INFO RUHHLG/AMCONSUL Leningrad 9381
BT
C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 06698

E.O. 12065: RDS-4 4/25/00 (MATSON, THOMAS J., JR.) OR-M
TAGS: PEPR, PINT, UR, US, IR
SUBJECT: RUMORS OF SOVIET-IRANIAN TALKS ON SOVIET
MILITARY ASSISTANCE AGAINST U.S.

1. (C. - ENTIRE TEXT)

2. A SOVIET CORRESPONDENT ACQUAINTANCE (PROTECT) HAS
TOLD AN EMBOFF OF RUMORS CIRCULATING AMONG "HIGHER LEVELS"
OF THE MOSCOW "ESTABLISHMENT" TO THE EFFECT THAT
(UNIDENTIFIED) ELEMENTS OF THE IRANIAN REGIME HAVE BEEN
SOUNDING OUT THE SOVIETS ON THEIR WILLINGNESS TO PROVIDE
MILITARY ASSISTANCE SHOULD THE U.S. INTERVENE IN IRAN.

3. OUR CONTACT SPECULATED THAT THE RUMORS, WHETHER
FACTUALLY CORRECT OR NOT, MAY HAVE BEEN INSPIRED FROM ON
HIGH AS A TRIAL BALLOON TO TEST THE MOOD OF "ESTABLISH-
MENT" OPINION. HE REASONED THAT IF SUCH

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State Department review completed

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IRANIAN-SOVIET DISCUSSIONS WERE INDEED UNDER WAY, THEY WOULD BE TIGHTLY HELD AND NEWS ABOUT THEM LEAKED ONLY WITH SOME DELIBERATE PURPOSE IN MIND.

4. HE THOUGHT IT POSSIBLE THAT A DEBATE ON THE ISSUE MAY BE GOING ON. PERHAPS OPPONENTS OF SOVIET INTERVENTION PUT THE RUMORS INTO CIRCULATION, HE MUSED, SO THAT THE KGB COULD REPORT THROUGH ITS OWN CHANNELS TO THE LEADERSHIP THAT THE PUBLIC OPPOSES SUCH A MOVE. IN ANY EVENT, OUR CONTACT, WHO IS A REGIME "LIBERAL", SAID THAT THOSE WHOM HE KNEW WERE REACTING "VERY HOSTILELY" TO THE POSSIBILITY OF SOVIET INTERVENTION IN IRAN. FEARS OF WAR BETWEEN THE U.S. AND SOVIET UNION, HE ASSERTED, WAS A TOPIC OF CONVERSATION IN EVERY HOUSEHOLD.

5. COMMENT: SUCCESSIVE EMBOFFS HAVE KNOWN SOURCE FOR TWO YEARS AND HAVE BEEN INCLINED TO TAKE WHAT HE SAYS AT FACE VALUE. SOURCE TRAVELS PRIMARILY IN "LIBERAL" CIRCLES, HOWEVER, SO HIS READING OF THE MOOD IN THIS CASE IS PROBABLY SKEWED TOWARD THE TYPICAL "LIBERAL" REACTION OF OPPOSITION. HOWEVER WIDESPREAD THIS OPPOSITION, WE DOUBT THAT THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP WOULD SEE IT AS AN INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLE TO A HYPOTHETICAL INTERVENTION, BUT RATHER AS A FACTOR TO BE CONSIDERED IN MOUNTING AND MOULDING THE PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN JUSTIFYING WHATEVER COURSE IS EVENTUALLY DECIDED ON. CONVERSATION WITH SOURCE TOOK PLACE PRIOR TO NEWS ABOUT THE ATTEMPTED HOSTAGE RESCUE. WATSON

END OF MESSAGE

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